

Opening of School Playgrounds

Q&A Factsheet



1 Why are the school playgrounds opening out-with school hours?

Many communities in Dundee have reported that there are not sufficient spaces to play in this City. School playgrounds provide additional safe and friendly places to play for our children and families.

Dundee City Council recognise the potential benefits of community engagement and the positive effects on children's health and happiness and therefore has agreed to test the opening of 15 school playgrounds. The rationale behind choosing schools has been on two factors:

- where communities have little existing access to play facilities or green space
- issues in relation to school sites (eg access, high levels of vandalism)

The Children and Families Service value the importance of play and commit to the delivery of the **Dundee Play Framework**, in which we have agreed to maximise the use of our school playgrounds.

2 Do I need to open ALL of my playgrounds, nursery facilities and green space?

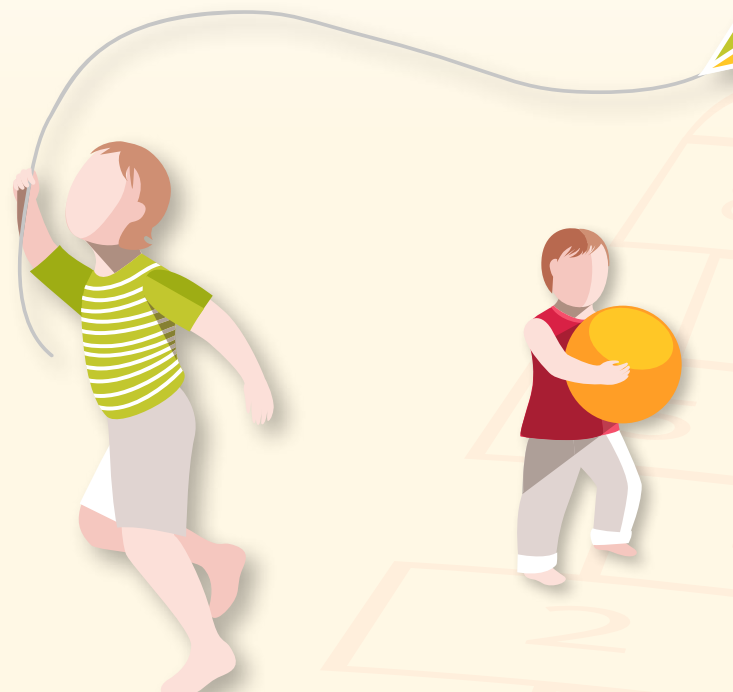
Not at all. Consider the needs of your children and families living in your community. Involve your Parent and Pupil Councils to find out what areas they want and need to play in after school. It is okay to open all or part of your playground. Due to the significant amount of equipment and loose parts within the Nursery we would recommend only opening nursery facilities for supervised sessions with families.

Just open the spaces that children and families want to play in. Remember to involve children and families and the wider community in the local decision making journey...a concrete playground may be great for children to scoot or cycle around.

- Your School and Family Development Worker can be trained to lead "Stay and Play" sessions to build families' knowledge and skills about playful activities.
- We can support with training for "Play Champions" for P5, P6, P7 pupils.

3 When will they be locked and opened?

These decisions are to be made locally under your leadership. The Facilities Management Services Team will open and lock the gates in your playground. Head Teachers can specify which gates are to be left open all night. Head Teachers are to confirm with their Facilities Assistant which gates are to be locked and/or which are to be kept open after school.



4 Will the playgrounds be open during weekends, school holidays and during the winter months?

The “designated open areas” will be kept open during weekends and school holidays (except Christmas Holidays).

Since this is a test, we would recommend that the playgrounds are open from 1 March to 31 October 2017. We will ask the Facilities Management Services Team to change their operations during this time. If your school wishes to open the playground all year round, then it is fine to agree this locally with your Facilities Assistant.

5 Who is responsible for checking the playground daily?

The Facilities Management Services Team will regularly check the playgrounds for vandalism or any other damage, taking remedial action, ensuring the school is available for use at the beginning of each day. This will continue over the school holidays.

Any incidents will be reported to the Police as required (see 4.1.2 of Tayside Contracts and DCC Facilities Management Services Partnership Agreement).

School staff are to continue to be responsible for the regular checking of loose playground equipment.

6 Who collects any glass, litter, needles and dog fouling etc?

The Facilities Management Services Team is responsible to report and safely dispose of all of the above. Therefore, it is key to involve your Facilities Assistant as part of your engagement process. All of the above must be monitored by the Facilities Management Services Team.

Dogs are not allowed into school playgrounds. Dog bins will therefore not be put inside the playgrounds.

7 What happens if the school has an Afterschool Club?

If you have clubs or Out of School Care Clubs in your playground/pitches after school, these must take priority over children and families using your playgrounds.

8 Who pays for any vandalism/repairs?

Risk management is an important part of managing play spaces. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) promotes a balanced approach to play - *“those providing play opportunities should focus on the real risks, while securing or increasing the benefits – not the paperwork”*.

Some schools have been vandalised with the gates locked. Facilities Management Services Team will monitor and compare the level of vandalism of the gates being open and closed. We will weigh up the benefits of this initiative against wear and tear of equipment/vandalism etc to determine its level of success.

There are no changes to the policy for vandalism arising from this initiative. Any vandalism relating to the school building eg broken windows, spray paint, breakages to rhone pipes, roof damage, boundary walls and railings etc, will continue to be covered by Council Insurance... please continue to report these via your Property Officer.



Please note - Children and Families Service have a SLA with Neighbourhood Services. If you are planning to purchase any new fixed play equipment or landscaping etc, contact Rod Houston, Senior Manager Environment on 4747 who will provide free advice.

Schools must consider the additional resources required to pay for the design, purchase and maintenance of play equipment.

For a maintenance fee, the Neighbourhood Resources' Play Ground Team can ensure:

- a certified inspection is carried out each year by a R.O.S.P.A qualified specialist and a permanent record maintained, as recommended by the manufacturer.
- general maintenance to all play equipment. A maintenance inspection sheet will be used to record inspection visits. The Playgrounds Team will carry out recorded inspections to each playground on six occasions throughout the year.

We are liaising with Neighbourhood Services to further develop this partnership for playgrounds.

9 What happens if there is an incident and someone is injured?

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to look after their children out of school hours. The playgrounds are a place for unsupervised activity, so a claim against the Council's Public Liability Insurance would be unlikely to succeed unless there was a fault in the structure or fabric of the building or playground.

10 How does this link with Local Community Planning processes?

Community access to schools outwith normal hours has been raised as a priority as part of ongoing consultation with local communities. It is recommended that since Local Learning Partnerships are now officially recognised as working groups of the LCPP, they are an appropriate Forum to raise, discuss and deal with issues relating to Community Access to Schools.

Communities Officers will liaise with Community Learning and Development staff, Community Safety Wardens, Community Organisations, Elected Members and members of the public to inform feedback to Local Learning Partnerships.

Should there be any requirement to undertake additional community engagement activities, Communities Officers based in each of the eight multi member Wards are in a great position to provide advice and assistance.

TOP TIP

HGIOS – 2.3 Learning Teaching and Assessment – Challenge Question:
“How well do we use our community and spaces to deliver high quality Outdoor Learning?”

- Read the **Play out of Hours!** A toolkit for opening the school playgrounds out with teaching hours <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00493571.pdf>
- Involve Parent and Pupil Councils.
- Use this as an opportunity to explore the outdoors as a context for learning – if your Primary School is interested in taking a whole school approach to Outdoor Learning and Play, please contact **Audrey White** for support
- HSE advice – take a Risk Benefit approach to play

**For further information on any of the above, please contact Audrey White:
audrey.white@dundecity.gov.uk or 01382 436921**

